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ABSTRACT

Field-responsive inservice education represents a program by which a college of education faculty goes into the field and forms collaborative relationships with individual schools, providing inservice training to teachers in the form of a graduate course, generally leading toward a master's degree. The university field team has access not only to students, but also to real-life situations and children, therefore instruction has direct relevance to actual practice. The major concern in the program is not only the transmission of knowledge and skills, but also the solving of educational problems. This report examines the program and discusses the issues and problems for both the university faculty and the teacher participant. (JD)

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Murray State University / Hopkinsville Middle School Teacher Corps Project

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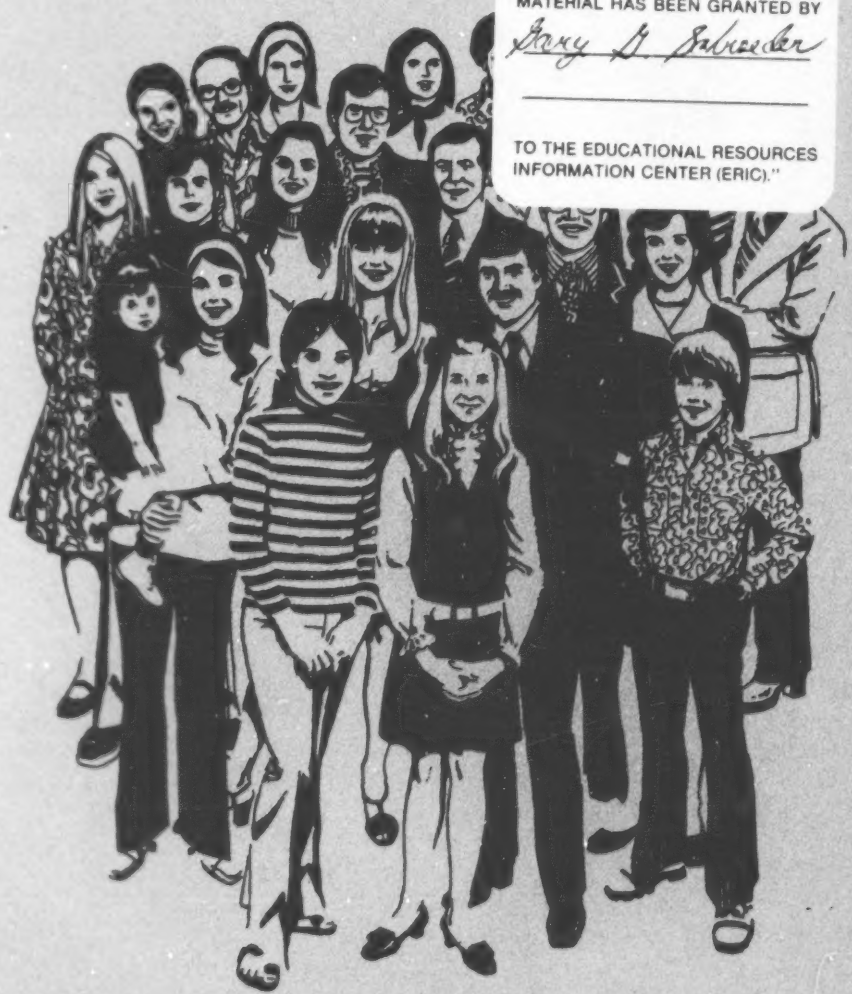

Beyond Field-Based Teacher Education

The concept of responsive in-service education

SP015180

Every Child is Gifted...

BEYOND FIELD-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION: THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIVE INSERVICE EDUCATION

By

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and
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Murray State University Teacher Corps Project
Occasional Paper Series
No. 5

Murray State University
Murray, Kentucky 42071

This publication is part of a series of occasional papers and books written by Teacher Corps staff members and teachers in an attempt to share some of the experiences gained in the Tenth Cycle Murray State University/Hopkinsville Middle School Teacher Corps Project during the 1975-77 school year. Below is a listing of titles of the total series. Copies are available upon request from the Teacher Corps Project Director, Murray State University, Murray, Ky., 42071.

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BEYOND FIELD-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION:

THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIVE INSERVICE EDUCATION

The role of the teacher education institution in staff development programs, never really clear in the past, has become even more nebulous in the past few years. Whether we like it or not, state legislative and state certification agencies, by requiring graduate degrees for standard teaching credentials or pay raises, have placed the university squarely in the middle of teacher needs for certification. However, other avenues for certification have begun to appear in the form of school district inservice programs, teacher centers, and professional consultant-facilitators, which are challenging the hegemony of institutions of higher education in the areas of inservice education and staff development. These alternative programs have arisen primarily in response to teacher dissatisfaction with higher education programs as meaningful vehicles for change and self-renewal. The college of education faculty which ignores the challenges that these alternative programs raise, runs the risk of becoming isolated from the mainstream of public education (and doomed to the oblivion which it so richly deserves). Furthermore, there is a limit to the demands that can be placed on teachers' time, and the notion that both school districts and universities can continue to develop extensive parallel inservice training programs seems to us to be financial and professional folly.

This paper explores a concept which we have called <u>field-responsive inservice education</u>, which we think represents a higher education response to the challenges of alternative inservice education and staff development programs. The field-responsive concept has emerged from the experience gained through our participation in a Cycle X Teacher Corps Project in-

volving Murray State University and Hopkinsville (Kentucky) Middle School. For us, field-responsive inservice education represents a program by which a college of education faculty might reach out to the field and form collaborative relationships with individual schools and school districts. We have not abandoned what we perceive to be our traditional function as professors of education, but we recognize that suble shifts that have occured in the way that we perceive our roles as college professors as we have moved from a college-based, through a field-based, and into a field-responsive program of inservice education.

In the traditional college-based program, the teacher is injected into a program which is basically pre-determined in terms of substance and format. He is removed, for almost the total period of instruction, from his own school environment and placed in the college classroom. He is isolated from his peers and his support base, and subjected to a program that is built around the notion that if he changes his teaching behavior, schools will be better places for kids. He knows however, that regardless of what he hears or learns, he is still going back to the same school, the same classroom, with the same principal and fellow teachers, and he also knows that the college instructor is not going there with him. (The college instructor is aware of the latter fact also, which is part of the problem.) What must result from such an encounter is mutual discussion of relatively "safe" topics which can be generalized in the neuter environment of the college classroom, the sum total of which roughly satisfies course requirements for graduate programs specified by the university or some other agency. Neither gains meaningful insight into the competencies or needs of the other, because neither sees the other in the real school environment.

Field-based programs, although they occur on the teacher's home ground, typically represent little programmatic change from college-based programs. The college professor is on site, and may spend some time in the school or classroom, but the program emphasis is still upon the predetermined curriculum and the objectives of the university graduate degree program. Although variations in activities and evaluations might occur, basic decisions concerning substance, format, and credit are determined by whatever vague forces (often political forces within the college) have shaped such graduate programs traditionally.

Our initial intent in Teacher Corps was to establish a field-based program, but a number of factors led us to reject the field-based concept, and to develop the idea of field-responsive inservice education. The most important of these factors, was the fact that we, as college professors, were not really prepared to deal with teachers on their home ground. We had all had experiences as consultants in these schools, but <u>not</u> where we had to keep coming back two days a week for two years! We became accountable and had to accept some ownership for what was occuring. As the concept of field-responsive inservice education emerged, negotiation became a way of life. The focus of the program was determined neither by the college professor or the classroom teacher, but was negotiated in both content and form. Our inservice program began to require on-site decisions about objectives, time requirements, amount of credit, and possible activities. We began to recognize that field-responsive inservice education would require a new way of structuring graduate programs in education in a number of key areas. In this paper, we will describe our experiences within five of these areas:

1. The process of setting objectives at an inservice site.
2. The appropriate role for professors in inservice programs.
3. The definition of the "official" graduate program.

4. The management and administration of inservice programs.
5. The focus and targeting of graduate programs in education.

Negotiated Objectives: The Interface Between Practitioner Needs and University Capabilities.

The experience of MSU Teacher Corps is that a unilaterally determined inservice education program has a number of drawbacks. For example, if it is important to actually see change occurring in the school as a result of inservice efforts, then it is unacceptable for teachers to be uninvolved or minimally involved in deciding what the college faculty is trying to do. It has been our experience that when teachers are not involved with the inservice program from its inception, that the phenomenon of teachers merely "taking up space" in the program becomes much more common. We have found it critical for the inservice program to reach right into classrooms, and for a sense of partnership to develop if the climate of change which we seek to promote is to occur. We have also found that effective and on-going negotiation about the nature of the inservice program is a good indicator of the degree to which change is occurring in the school (and also in the college of education). As professors of education we have had to discover, sometimes painfully, that we need to do some things to insure that negotiation and change will be present in the program.

We have had to find out, for example, what people are actually concerned about in their school and teaching, and then to meet them half-way in structuring what we consider to be a reputable inservice graduate education program. We have found that although needs assessments are extremely important, that it is in the process of negotiating about inservice programs that we really find out what people want and are concerned about. It is also in the process of negotiation that both we as professors and they as teachers take ownership of the program that is evolved.

A second thing that we have had to do to promote change has been to move in the direction of increasing individualization in inservice activities. The more individualized our programs are, the more productive they seem to be. However, the individualization itself must be based on agreements reached between the teaching faculty and the inservice team on what it is that the inservice program is to be concerned with. The experience of our Teacher Corps Project has been that the greater the amount of contact between professors and teachers in visitation and consultation, the more results will be derived in changes occurring in the program at the school site. As the relationship between the teacher and inservice faculty member becomes closer and more cooperative, in terms of focusing on problems that are real for both of them, the activities and projects in the inservice program tend to become increasingly intensive and demanding. The level of tension in the program increases as it becomes more meaningful and important to the participants, and the possibilities for frustration in the inservice faculty increase as pressures for individualized activities begin to conflict with pressures for a unified set of activities which will meet the needs of the college faculty for a cohesive graduate education program.

Negotiation becomes a critical factor in dealing with these tensions and frustrations, as problems almost inevitably effect groups and individuals in all parts of the program, both at the school site and at the college of education.

A third factor that we have found to be important in promoting negotiation and change, has been the development of procedures which encourage significant contact with teachers in their classrooms. We have found that

as far as making change in teaching behavior goes, our successful impact rate has soared as we have started spending more time in the classroom than in large group meetings. Activities which focus on professor-teacher interaction in the teacher's classroom seem to encourage cooperation and cohesiveness between the university staff and the teaching staff, whereas large-group oriented activities seem to lean towards the teacher-student relationship with more time spent in controlling and directing behavior on the part of the professor. On the other hand, it must be admitted that our desire for individualized work tends to dominate, and we have had trouble dealing with needs that we have felt for large group instruction and required group activities. We hope that as we get better at working with teachers on an individual basis, and handling the negotiation process, that we will gain skills in a more pro-active trade off between large group and individual activities.

A fourth factor which has been gaining importance in our inservice work, has been the phenomenon of teachers interacting with us as a group or a block, rather than as individuals on many work issues. Typically in graduate education programs, matters of policy concerning credit and work requirements, for example, are worked out between the individual professor and the individual student within the context of university or department rules. We have found in the beginning, that although our official policy had been to continue this mode of interaction, that the nature of the program made the carrying out of this mode of operation difficult. The "instant feedback" the teachers gave each other about all of their interactions with the university staff and their many opportunities to get together for mutual reinforcement made it very difficult for individual problems to remain individual problems. In a sense, the need to confront "public

opinion" on many issues, forced us to deal continuously with a number of teacher concerns which we might have ignored in a more typical classroom situation.

The need to work as a team has caused the college of education faculty members to feel a sense of loss of autonomy and even, at times, a feeling of a compromising of personal values and standards as program decisions have had to be made. On the other hand, there have been many feelings of exhilaration as great strides have been made by the teachers and teacher faculty towards higher levels of sophistication in program design and implementation. There is no doubt that the utilization of a field-responsive approach to inservice education and staff development has forced some new thinking on the nature of "college professor" in this new situation.

Changed Role For Professors: Scholars As Change Agents

There is no doubt that the college professor members of the project, working as an inservice education and staff development team, have felt some ambiguity about their roles. In expanding their functions in the field-responsive program, they have gone beyond the role of teacher trainers and become almost change agents for quality education. The ambiguity in this role has not come about primarily through doubts about personal capabilities to deal with these functions, but rather in response to concerns about the capability of the college of education graduate program to stretch to fit the emerging field-responsive way of working with teachers. The professors have felt extremely positive about the outcomes of the Teacher Corps Inservice effort, but have been concerned about the response of campus-based colleagues to the liberties that have had to be taken with the standard graduate program. These concerns have arisen as field-responsive professors have assumed new roles, and particularly as they

begin to work as a member of the inservice instructional team.

Typically, professors have had tremendous latitude in the way that they operate their courses. Working within loosely defined guidelines, they have been free to structure content, develop grading criteria, and serve as final arbiters on questions of theory or method. In interaction with the larger college faculty, each professor has had the role of autonomous professional, accountable for his own actions. When professors begin to operate in what we have termed field-responsive inservice and staff development programs, however, much of this autonomy must be sacrificed for the effective functioning of the inservice team and the success of the school change program. Grades, objective, and activities must be arrived at through team functioning, and because of the need to negotiate as a team with the school faculty, there must be a high level of agreement among the inservice team members. If this agreement does not exist, the areas of disagreement will surely surface at the school site and cause problems as teachers respond to ambiguities they sense in the program implementation--especially in terms of inservice requirements and grading criteria. The loss of autonomy inherent in team functioning challenges the concept that many staff members have of themselves as "professor" and requires a new accomodation in terms of the requirements of the field-responsive situation.

Although increased individualization and in-classroom cooperative relationships have greatly increased the change which results from the inservice and staff development program, they have also brought some problems for the role of the professor. In responding to what we have perceived as increased effectiveness, we have found ourselves steadily

increasing the amount of time devoted to this new style of working with teachers and decreasing the clock hours devoted to more traditional styles of class sessions. Whereas in the more traditional inservice programs classroom visits are seen as an "extra", in the mode that has been evolving in the MSU Teacher Corps Project they have become mandatory and part of the staff modus operandi. We find that if professors miss days on-site when they are scheduled for classroom visits, the teachers increasingly resent it. They also increasingly resent large-group inservice time which takes away from their own time for personal projects. The field-responsive mode of inservice and staff development programming is particularly demanding of professor time and seems to generate recurring problems for scheduling and program requirements. Since the inservice staff must ultimately attest, in some fashion, to the fact that the school faculty has successfully completed an approved graduate program, there is a critical need to conceptualize and manage a complex mix of personal and small group projects and large group activities.

Although the new role for the college professors in the MSU Teacher Corps Project brings with it problems and frustrations, it also provides great opportunities for advocating better education for children and better working environments for teachers. The opportunities inherent in field-responsive programming to develop strategies which will produce observable program change and development provides the motivation for professors to cope with the frustrations which are generated. In addition to working as supervisors, the college faculty make many friends at the school site, deal continually with the school administrators, meet and interact with district personnel, and generally find themselves in situations where they can have significant interaction with all of the people

who are necessary for putting new programs into operation. However, these opportunities have brought with them increased needs for cooperation, a team spirit, and, ultimately, many many more meetings. In a temporary system, which a field-responsive inservice and staff development project represents, staff meetings are the vehicle for all decision making. The need to make these meetings productive and effective has been a difficult challenge, requiring considerable discipline and strong leadership. The style of the meetings is different from the usual faculty meeting, because the required output must be continuous, practical, and effective. The management function is critical in field-responsive projects, and the flexibility required for effective management places considerable strain on the traditional way of organizing college of education graduate programs.

Redefining Graduate Programs: Continuous Progress Individualization At The Graduate Level

All that has been said earlier, in relation to individualizing programs, negotiation and change, and a team approach to program development and implementation points to the fact that a different way of conceptualizing university graduate programs is imperative if the field-responsive concept in inservice education is to be viable. The sheer fact is that it is very difficult to carry on a field-responsive program within the confines of three-hour courses formulated into predetermined sequences. In a three-hour course format, it is almost inevitable that conflicts will arise between the directions taken by the inservice team and an individual college of education faculty member's understanding of what typically goes on in courses of particular names.

Part of the design of the MSU Teacher Corps Project was that the participants should earn a master's degree or thirty hours above a master's

degree as a result of their participation in two years of inservice and staff development programming. In concert with the State Department of Education, the Program Coordinator of the Secondary Education, and the University Registrar, a match was made between the stated objectives of the Teacher Corps program and the University Secondary Teacher Education program. This match was in terms of time requirements, program content requirements, and degree requirements. From the beginning of the project, it has been the intent of the Teacher Corps staff that there should be as much congruence between the University graduate program and the Teacher Corps graduate program as possible. However, there is no doubt that the actual content and form of the two programs is, on the surface, quite different. However, that the two programs are different, has not dissuaded us from thinking that field-responsive programs ought to be as much like college-based programs as possible. It is our feeling that emphasizing the commonalities of the two types of programming provides the essential conceptual structure which allows the college professors on the Teacher Corps staff to work together in very different roles from traditional college-based faculty members. However, the inflexibility of the basic college of education graduate structure makes a realistic and above-board accomodation with the field-responsive program very difficult.

During the two years of the MSU Teacher Corps Project the participants earned credit for specific courses in the standard secondary teacher education graduate program. However, due to the nature of the field-responsive program, the actual course names for which the participants

were given credit, might not have fit their inservice and staff development activities at a given time. Whereas, over the span of the two year project, the teachers actually gained the skills specified in the courses for which they were given credit, the use of course names to identify the skills or knowledge that teachers were gaining during specific time blocks did not prove to be very accurate or helpful. In a sense, the use of course names and numbers forced us to take too long a view in our planning. We constantly had to refer back to the original project objectives in aligning the inservice program with the college of education's graduate program. We did not have meaningful intermediate course-type titles which we could use to identify and discuss what was actually happening to the teachers. This put all of us at a disadvantage in talking about the gains that were being made in the program, because credit or certification of competence was actually deferred until the granting of the degree or certificate...which did not occur until the end of the project. In a field-responsive program we see a real need to be able to have more flexible ways of identifying both goals and goal attainment within the overall college of education graduate program. We do not see elective numbers, independent studies, or general "Topics In.." courses as an answer, because the over-use of these mechanisms sidesteps the issue of the students' overall progress toward ends which the college of education and its faculty can certify as significant and coherent in terms of complexes of skills and knowledge. (That the general college of education faculty approve of field-responsive programming is critical, because all of the members of the field-responsive program team fill two roles--that of field-responsive team member and also that of college-

based faculty member.) We see the need to be able to take "smaller bites" of the graduate program, and to be able to add these "bites" up to a complete graduate program. At the very least, we see the need to routinely offer credits in sizes other than three hours, so that the amount of credit given can match the amount of work undertaken by the participants and the inservice team.

Our work in the MSU Teacher Corps Project has identified what we feel to be several important components of the process by which specific objectives and activities are agreed upon. The first component, is the need to identify the context in which the field-responsive program will function. By the context, we refer to the constellation of problems and issues that the program will focus on. In identifying the context utilizing terms compatible with the terms used in the college graduate program, it becomes possible to select, from the overall offerings of the university, the specific content which will be applicable to a specific field-responsive program. The selection of content in reference to context, also keeps all members of the staff in the same ball-park when talking about possible activities and objectives. The second component is the identification of the short term problems or needs that are to be addressed in particular parts of the program, and the initial stating of inservice objectives. This is done both through needs assessments, surveys of the teacher faculty, and through reference to a steering committee representative of the teaching faculty. The third component relates to the organizing of possible sequences of activities by the inservice team and the negotiation of these activities with the teacher steering committee (in lieu of negotiation with the entire teaching faculty...

a process which we see as being prohibitive) as to the final form of the objectives and activities. The fourth component is the process of deciding on the form that credit and/or certification will take. In a sense, the fourth component consists of placing the negotiated objectives and activities into perspective against the overall graduate program. In the Teacher Corps Project this has been very difficult. Without being able to meaningfully match the amount of credit and the title of the skill or knowledge with what was actually being done, both the teachers and professors had to constantly refer to their own internal understanding of "graduate programs" to decide whether or not what they were doing was reasonable, sufficient, or reputable. If we had been able to refer to a model of a graduate program which fit our way of working, it would have been much easier to check ourselves and our work against meaningful standards. It would also have been easier to relate our program to our colleagues at the university.

Management Of The Accomodations Between Graduate Programs Developed On-Site And The "Official" Umbrella Of The Various Departments

As we have worked in Teacher Corps it has become obvious, at least to us, that some special changes need to be made in the way that business is carried on at the university if a field-responsive program is to be viable. We are acutely aware that much of our own success is due to the large amounts of extra funds which are available to us for "buying" the services which we need in working in the way that we do.

The key to a demonstration project such as ours is that the staff works very hard to conceptualize what it is doing in a form which is useful for others. This conceptualization attempts to pinpoint not only the successes which have occured, but also the problems which would be

encountered if the program were adopted "without funds". With this in mind, we have identified a number of issues or problems which will probably face any university department embarking on a field-responsive program.

1. Graduate programs must be altered to the extent that field-responsive programs can count as part of the regular program, rather than as experimental programs with special rules.

2. Professors who work in field based programs will have to spend tremendous amounts of time with the programs. Time will need to be found for instructional team meetings and also for many hours of work in the field.

3. University departments who enter into the field-responsive arena will have to reconsider how they tabulate work load and working hours if professors are going to feel that they have a base of support in spending the hours that they do in the field-responsive program.

4. Universities will have to rethink what counts as being a "good faculty member" when it comes time to hand out rewards. If field-responsive professors see all special favors going to those professors who work on committees and outside research leading to books, then they will not be motivated to work with field-responsive inservice education.

5. Special support will have to be organized for preparation of research materials and study supplies. When professors teach four courses over a number of years, it is not unreasonable to expect that course development is an integral part of their load. However, when professors are involved with several field-responsive project sites, which probably change frequently, working in an individualized mode, expecting to provide expertise and technical support for change in schools, it is unrealistic to expect that they are going to have time to do adequate course development. In the Teacher Corps Project, we have found that the services of materials development specialists are indispensable.

6. Almost by definition, each project will be innovative to some extent. At least, we can expect the activities and objectives to vary for each project. These variations are going to pose problems for university faculties as regular decisions must be made about appropriateness, standards, certification, etc. We see a real need for university-based mechanisms for dealing with these problems.

7. Our experience in the field has been that regular advisement procedures for students are very difficult in a field-responsive program. Reliance on the usual procedure has caused us endless problems and misunderstandings. We see a real need for a centralized office to handle advisement. We have found it almost impossible to get all of the students together with their advisors, to get them together when conferences are needed, and above all, to make sure that advisors "have the same story" for the teachers. We recognize that these concerns are problems in any program, but in a field-responsive program, where the teachers respond so much as a group, problems of advisement seem to almost immediately get blown out of proportion.

8. The role of a field-based coordinator of field-responsive programs seems to be critical. Someone needs to be out in the field making sure that projects go.

Summary

In summary, the use of the Field-responsive model provides the means by which inservice education may become more frankly experimental and theoretical. In the past, utilizing either the university-based or field-based course model, the plan for instruction was almost entirely didactic. The end was almost entirely the transmission of knowledge and skills. In the field-responsive model, however, the concern is not only the transmission of knowledge and skills, but also the solving of educational problems and the evaluation of methods. In the field-responsive situation, the university field team has access not only to students, but also to real-life situations and children. In working with the teachers, it will be possible to design intentional experiments in teaching method while conducting inservice education.

To us, it seems clear that the field-responsive model opens up many new avenues of growth and possibilities for the university. It revitalizes a commitment to the improvement of public education, to research and scholarship, and to an active and on-going examination of the most effective form for graduate inservice teacher education programs.